

The Real Thomas Paine

Patriot and Publicist

A Philosopher Misunderstood

By HENRY LEFFMANN

This essay was read at a meeting of the HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, April 10th, 1922. It was very favorably received, being specially commended by several of the officers of the Society and by many of the audience. It has been published in the PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE, being given the place of honor—the first article. It is an effort to do justice to a man who has been unfairly abused, and especially to show the baselessness of Roosevelt's assertion (in his life of Gouverneur Morris) that Paine was an atheist. I trust that you will read the essay, as it relates to matters on which Americans have been misinformed.

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THE REAL THOMAS PAINE, PATRIOT AND PUBLICIST. A PHILOSOPHER MISUNDERSTOOD.

BY HENRY LEFFMANN.

More than two thousand years ago a Greek philosopher devoted himself, as was the not infrequent custom of that group, to framing paradoxes—or, as we now call them—fallacies. One of these was that there can be no motion. “For,” said he, “a body cannot move in the place where it is, and it cannot move in the place where it is not. Therefore, it cannot move at all.” The world has gone on doing this sort of thing continually, and today, we have the doctrine of Relativity, of which it is said that the essence is that you cannot tell where you are unless you know what time it is, and you cannot tell what time it is unless you know where you are.

I must leave to mathematicians and logicians the task of rebutting the motion fallacy and explaining the doctrine of Relativity, but I refer to the paradox of Zeno because, while I feel that it is wrong as regards motion, it has some validity as applied to history. I doubt if history can be written fairly. Contemporaries cannot write it so, for they are too much under the influence of personal feelings, self-interest and prejudice;

those who come after cannot do it justly, because they fail to appreciate the entire environment in which the events unrolled. At best, we can get but an imperfect picture of the past, a distorted picture of the present and a guess at the future.

I am going to try, however, to take you back this evening into the environment of the last half of the eighteenth century, when certain events occurred that had a most profound influence on the history of the world. After much warfare and much diplomacy, the British flag had been established over the Atlantic slope, from the Arctic snows to the borders of the Gulf of Mexico, a region that literally stretched from pine to palm. From several distinct motives this region had been rather extensively settled. Escape from religious persecution had determined many; desire to improve their home conditions had impelled others. Some had come because the others were coming, intending to establish themselves in the professions and in business. There was an abundance of land; the woods were full of game and the streams of fish. The British monarchs, who granted to their favorites large tracts of land, had interest mostly in the direct profit that might come from the exploitation of these areas. The Spanish and Portuguese, who, by a geographic accident, had been directed strongly to the southern portion of the hemisphere, had found abundant supplies of the precious metals, and we were not astonished that when Charles II granted to Penn the territory of Pennsylvania, he reserved to himself one-fifth of the gold and silver ore found in the province. He also exacted an annual tribute of three beaver skins. The skins were easily found, but the province has never yielded any appreciable amount of the precious metals. Time was to show, however, that Pennsylvania contains stores of raw material far more valuable than gold or silver, for its coal, iron ore, oil and gas have been the

foundations of the greatest fortunes that the world has ever seen.

As the native population increased, and immigrants came who had no allegiance to the British crown, or had repudiated that allegiance, it was inevitable that the colonists should be steadily drawn away from the Mother Country. This tendency was all the stronger in consequence of the character of the population. The men and women who came to these shores, brave enough to face the risks of the sea voyage, wild Indians and other dangers, would have spirit enough to resist the conditions of absentee landlordism, for that was what much of the British Colonial administration was. More positive conditions tending to separation were at work. Manufacturing began to develop, and British manufacturing interests soon became alarmed by the danger of competition, and steps were early taken to thwart the colonies.

Parliament resolved that the establishment of industries in the colonies should be discouraged at all cost. An interesting phase of this antagonism is shown in connection with molasses. The colonies, especially the New England ones, were actively engaged in the importation of molasses, which was fermented into rum, and sent out to the African coast for the purchase of slaves. Parliament passed an act limiting the importation of molasses to British possessions. This gave a great monopoly to the British owners of the sugar lands, and led to extensive smuggling on the part of the colonists. The condition was serious, and we can appreciate the remark that John Adams makes in his reminiscences, "that we should not blush to acknowledge that molasses had a good deal to do with American independence."

It is not possible to enter here upon the details of the movement for independence. It is well known to all who have studied the contemporary literature, that

the people were much divided on the question. Some, like Joseph Galloway, were strongly opposed to the attitude of the Mother Country, but wholly unwilling to break away from allegiance; others were less loyal, but regarded actual separation as inadvisable. In the early 70's, Washington expressed himself as decidedly opposed to independence, and Franklin, in London, said that he had never heard anyone in America, drunk or sober, express a desire for separation. Man proposes, but economic forces dispose, and the conflict of commercial interests was hurrying the colonies on to antagonisms that could have but one outcome. As in all such cases, some leader was required to formulate the plans around which the people could rally. In the latter part of 1774, an Englishman arrived in this city, who was destined to be the favorite and aid of the nation's greatest leaders and to have great confidences imposed upon him, yet by reason of some seriously misunderstood writings of his later life, to have his memory execrated, and his whole career grossly misrepresented.

Thomas Paine was born in England in 1737. It is not necessary to trace his early life. He was brought up substantially under Quaker auspices, and learned a trade, but entered the revenue service of Great Britain. It was a service permeated throughout with corruption, and we need not be surprised if he fell, like his associates, into evil ways. He was removed, reinstated and again removed. He attracted the attention of Franklin, who advised him to come to America, and gave him a letter of introduction. He arrived in Philadelphia in the latter part of 1774, and soon became a successful newspaper writer. He was strongly impressed with the idea that the colonies could not get satisfactory conditions, nor secure justice and free economic life, except by separation from the Mother Country, but as just noted, even prominent Americans

were lukewarm to this view. The bloodshed at Lexington meant war, although probably no one saw this clearly at that time. The gathering storm of dissension with Great Britain found articulate expression in a pamphlet entitled "Common Sense," written by Paine, and published anonymously, not infrequent in those days, in January, 1776. It is admitted now by leading historians that this pamphlet, of which it is said 120,000 copies were sold, was the most important production of the time in drawing the American people to the independence movement. All the contemporary literature indicates this. I am not here, however, as a modern Parson Weems, to sublimate the subject of my discourse until he loses all semblance of humanity. Thomas Paine was a human being, and it is as a human being that he must be judged. I confess, therefore, that to me the text of "Common Sense" seems rather heavy. Very different, indeed, must have been the reactions of our forefathers to polemical literature than at present. Perhaps, there is no better example than the manner in which the resolution of independence was treated by the newspapers. On the 2nd day of July, 1776, the Continental Congress passed Richard Henry Lee's resolution, offered a few weeks before, declaring the colonies free and independent States. Surely, today, such an action would be displayed on the front page in type as large as the composing room could command. Yet the announcement was made in small type in an out-of-the-way place on one of the inside pages, without further comment. We cannot doubt that "Common Sense" aroused the greatest interest, yet I believe that if we can make the grotesque supposition of it having been published in the early months of our late war, it would have not secured one volunteer for the army nor sold a Liberty Bond. We must judge Paine in his environment, and it was he who was essentially qualified to appeal to the lukewarm, hesitating and indifferent,

and turn them in great numbers to the support of the cause. He did more, for he incorporated into the latter part of his essay a paragraph that lays down clearly the principle upon which the Declaration is based. A few weeks ago Mr. Carson aptly pointed out that the Declaration is not a document that founded a government. It merely cuts us loose from England. Many years of labor still remained for the great fathers of this country to weld these colonies into a nation, and Paine, by the way, was fully in sympathy with such a movement. In the closing portions of "Common Sense" is the following paragraph:

"Were a manifesto to be published, and dispatched to foreign Courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured, and the peaceable methods we have ineffectually used for redress, declaring at the same time that, not being any longer able to live happily or safely under the cruel disposition of the British Court, we had been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time assuring all such Courts of our peaceable disposition towards them, such a memorial would produce more good effects to this Continent than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain."

About six months after "Common Sense" was published, Jefferson wrote the Declaration, which, after amendment by Congress, was adopted by the vote of most, but not all, of the members thereof. A careful examination of that document will show that with the exception of certain declarations about human rights, the positive feature is just what Paine advised, namely, a protest to the world at large of the unjust treatment to which the colonies had been subjected, of the many appeals they had made for redress, of the final exhaustion of their patience, and of their feeling that nothing remained but to throw off their allegiance. A perusal of the introductory and final paragraphs of the

Declaration will show the anticipations that Paine's sentences embody. The bulk of the text of the document is taken up with the twenty-seven specific charges against the King of Great Britain, and in accordance with Paine's view, it carries no petition to the Ministry or Parliament. The group of resolutions offered by Lee in June included that of independence, one looking toward a closer alliance of the colonies and one providing for foreign alliances. For a long while no definite action was taken on either of the latter, but suggestions of aid from France were made in 1775, although it took a long while to bring about actual help. In 1763 the treaty of Paris had taken from France all her possessions on the North American area, and, naturally, the French cherished the hope of recovering these lands, as they did of recovering Alsace and Lorraine. When the American colonies revolted the hour of France's revenge struck, but, for a long while, the French King hesitated to take open action. In this period private enterprises were made. It is not necessary to discuss here the business in which Beaumarchais was engaged, but Paine had a part in some of the affairs, for which he has been unjustly criticised. It is not likely that in those days, any more than in our own, such extensive operations in money were conducted with strict honesty, and Paine deemed it his duty to make public certain facts with which he had become acquainted through his official position. He had been made Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and, in the somewhat loose organization of the National Administration in those days, was practically the Foreign Secretary of the United States. The Silas Deane affair is not capable of thorough analysis at this day, but the only charge that can be brought against Paine is that he was indiscreet, and it may be said that discretion was not one of his strong points. In this affair he incurred the displeasure of Gouverneur Mor-

ris, and years afterwards Morris was able to do Paine an ugly turn. France, later on, became the open ally of the United States and sent ships, money and men to our shores. In a large remittance of money Paine was one of those chosen to take charge, which he did safely, arriving at Boston in August, 1781, with a large sum, which was very welcome to the struggling patriots. For several years he was more or less intimately connected with the armies in the field, and by means of his pen had served to maintain the spirits of the soldiers. His work in this direction was published from time to time under the title of "The Crisis."

The war closing with the victory of the Americans, the treaty of peace released the territory of the thirteen States and some additional areas from British allegiance, but in that treaty the several States were recognized as independent sovereignties, and this view was dominant for many years, and, indeed, still operates in many respects. Paine was not at all friendly to this States-rights view, and Washington was very much opposed to it. Jefferson was the exponent of the independent sovereignty idea, and we may be glad, I think, that fate put him in France during the sessions of the Federal Convention.

During his entire American residence, Paine had been active in the interest of the colonies. He had enjoyed the friendship and confidence of many of the great men who are now enshrined in our memories. He had enemies and detractors, of course. No man nor woman who leads an active life can escape antagonism. Washington is the great American hero, yet bitter denunciation was his portion during a great deal of his life. He went out of office under a storm of denunciation as great as any President has had to face. McMaster expresses a doubt whether he could have been elected to a third term had he been disposed to accept. Certainly, he would not have received unanimous support. Lin-

coln stands out as sharing the honors with Washington, yet a Delaware Senator, during the War of Secession, in open Senate, called Lincoln an imbecile. Said Liebig, the chemist, "Show me a man who has made no mistakes and I will show a man who has done nothing." It may be said, "Show us a man who has made no enemies and we will show you a man who had no active part in affairs of his country." It must be borne in mind that our forefathers, while not showing the peculiar political antagonisms of today, due largely to the overwhelming influence of the spoils system, were yet very bitter in their expressions. The Federalistic and States-rights tendencies were in open and bitter war, and epithets were handed about in newspapers and speeches that exceed in fierceness many of our wildest party rancours. Jefferson condemned the Supreme Court on account of its Federalistic tendencies, and said that the Congress was a collection of stock-jobbing rascals. One might consume hours in setting forth the scurrility and even indecency with which public men were condemned in those days.

After the war, Paine interested himself in several important matters, among others, in the design and construction of an iron bridge, but it is not opportune to consider this question here. Leaving the details of some of his labors, I pass to the second phase of his life, which has led to the unfavorable attitude of many persons toward him and to much misrepresentation and abuse.

On July 14, 1789, three months after Washington was inaugurated, the Bastille fell before a Paris mob. Many of us, at the mention of this incident, seem to see Defarge, of the wine-shop, standing at his gun, grown doubly hot in the service of four fierce hours, and we think of the numerous political prisoners that were released from unjust imprisonment. The cold facts of history, however, often destroy these popular opinions,

and, as a matter of fact, the Bastille contained at that time only seven prisoners, of whom four had been committed for forgery, two were committed as insane, a custom in those days, and the seventh was a young scion of an aristocratic family, who was such a consummate scoundrel that his relatives had him committed to prison to save him from the scaffold.

As in the bloodshed at Lexington, the fire lighted at the Bastille could not be extinguished without more blood, and France went on to the Revolution and the Terror. Burke's essay against the Revolution aroused Paine's ire, and he replied to it in an essay, entitled, "The Rights of Man." He incurred the enmity of the British authorities, was indicted, but escaped to France in 1792, where he was elected a member of the National Assembly. His position was remarkable, for he could not understand the language. He showed considerable courage in his attitude; among other matters, he voted against the execution of the King, advising that he should be held in banishment as a hostage, and declaring that his execution would alienate American sympathy. He was probably right on this point, but conditions had so far advanced toward the Terror that he secured only enmity and suspicion. During this period attacks on the church by French leaders became more and more severe. Finally, there was a complete official overthrow of the established religion, which was proscribed. Not unnaturally, there was a reaction, and those prominent in the new order set up ceremonies intended to mock the former faiths. Thus, the Commune of Notre Dame fitted up the church as a Temple of Reason, had a personation of the Goddess of Reason, and carried out absurd and offensive ceremonies. The great leader of the Revolution, Robespierre, was opposed to such proceedings. He was a deist, not an atheist. Employing his power to control the nation, he instituted, although amid much opposition, the

worship of the "Supreme Being" with himself as pontiff.

Such conditions could only result in a complete breakdown of religious faith, and Thomas Paine attempted to stay the movement by a treatise which he called the "Age of Reason." It was a strictly deistical work, and was, in fact, one of the many evidences of the change that had come over the minds of many thinking men in Europe. The schism that divided the church in the 16th century, substituted, as far as most of the Nordic race was concerned, an authoritative book for an authoritative church. Through the latter half of the eighteenth century the conflict of certain scientific and critical developments with the letter of the Scriptures became very active. A large number of thinking men felt that some re-interpretation was needed. It is not possible, in the space and time here available, to do more than indicate some of the salient features. The storm broke from several directions. In 1753, Astruc, a French physician, published, in Paris, a book entitled, "Consideration of the MSS. used by Moses in the Preparation of Genesis." It is the foundation of the modern system of criticism of the Pentateuch, known as "Astruc's key," since he was the first to point out the distinction between the Elohist and Jahvist texts. In 1776 appeared the volume of Gibbon's history containing the terrible 15th and 16th chapters, in which the accepted views in regard to early Christian history were challenged. In 1782, Joseph Priestley published his "History of the Corruptions of Christianity," which was important as a foundation of the historical method of criticism now much in vogue. In this period, also, appeared the works of Buffon and Hutton, on Geology, which could not fail to challenge the chronology of the Bible.

The result of these and many similar publications was that a large number of learned and sincere men

turned against creeds and literal interpretations of Scripture, and sought a basis for ethical and moral stability, by what seemed a simpler method, a belief in a Deity who is revealed in nature, merciful, omnipotent, the creator and ruler of the universe. They sought to find evidence of such a Power in the manifestations of nature, and found them abundantly to their own satisfaction. In this way they became "deists," and so far from being "atheists," they scorned the ascription, and found no words too severe to condemn those who could not see the evidence of God in nature. They labored industriously to establish their thesis, and many of them became convinced that only by sacrificing the belief in a written revelation could a true faith be secured; that is, they sacrificed theology to save religion; religion being to them a system of morals. It was in this spirit that Priestley wrote his essay; it was in this spirit that Jefferson made up the expurgated copy of the Gospels, known as the "Jefferson Bible," and it was in the same spirit that Paine wrote his famous work, which earned him so much admiration from humble readers and so much condemnation from many eminent ones. The aim of Astruc, Priestley, Jefferson, Paine and many others of less fame was to substitute an age of reason for an age of faith. Paine's task was, however, specific. Fate had placed him in a nation in which the whole social fabric was breaking down. Church, Government, courts of law, had all been essentially wrecked, and extravagant tendencies developed. The "Age of Reason," which he wished to inaugurate, had no resemblance to the disgusting ceremonies in which the Goddess of Reason had figured, nor did he approve of Robespierre's cult of the Supreme Being. Paine's theology is that which is embodied in the Declaration of Independence. It rested on the "laws of nature and of nature's God," a phrase that we have every reason to believe was Jefferson's own.

It was in the latter part of 1793 that Paine began his work, which shows a most careful study of the text of the Bible, and which applies in the main the methods of treatment now usual among critics, except that there are a good many expressions that are sarcastic and offensive to devout believers. This is a blemish, but we must allow something for the spirit of the times and for the audience to which the appeal was made. The crucial point is the charge of atheism, which has been so often brought against the author. It is true that such a charge is not heard today to any extent, but two distinguished Americans have made it in recent years, Albert Bushnell Hart and Theodore Roosevelt. I did not attempt to argue the question with the latter, but I wrote to Dr. Hart, asking what evidence he had for the statement. He replied that he was wrong, and that today Paine would be considered a conservative Unitarian. Let me quote as evidence of Paine's views on the subject. He makes a profession of faith in the opening chapter, as follows:

“I believe in one God and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

“I believe in the equality of men, and I believe that that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy.”

He then proceeds to express his disbelief in the several established religious cults, and to denounce them as making for the enslavement of the human mind. His definition of religious duties agrees very closely with that of the Prophet Micah: “Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with thy God.”

In chapter 9 he specifies the basis of his faith:

“It is only in Creation that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and vari-

ous as they may be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary to know of God.

“Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate His wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible Whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scriptures that any human hand might make, but the Scripture called the Creation.”

There is no doubt as to the classification of these phrases. They are not atheistical, but they are characteristic, intolerant utterances of deism. With the same positiveness that the churches of his day insisted upon the plenary inspiration of the Bible and its perfect adaptation as a guide to faith, he insists on the plenary inspiration of the creation and its adaptation as a guide for moral and ethical principles. The lines I have quoted are potentially as intolerant as any to be found in the sermons of the most uncompromising ecclesiastics. These utterances of Paine cancel all claims to his being a liberal in religion, and show him to be a bigot, as I have, in my personal experience, found all deists of his type to be, for, had anyone challenged his argument and declared it impossible to interpret nature so, such a skeptic would have been denounced. In this matter, Paine simply stands on a level with other human

beings, neither higher nor lower. Each of us determines individually the standards of morals and ethics and the extent to which we should be allowed to follow our inclinations. Society in its composite relation interferes and sets meets and bounds to such tendencies.

Paine broke abruptly, and even brutally, with the generally accepted views. After a long and active life, in which his allusions to dogmatic Christianity had been practically merely glittering generalities, he threw upon the English-speaking world, then generally accepting the Bible as the inspired word of God, without exception of any text, a book in which the sacred document was held up to scorn. Within the ranks of scholars much of what he said had been often said and long known, but Paine's book appealed to the masses, and undoubtedly led many away from the faith of their fathers. He may, indeed, be described in the language in which Byron describes Gibbon:

"Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer.

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Which waked his foes to wrath that grew from fear;
And doomed him to the zealot's ready Hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well."

It can be shown that in Paine's day and at the present day the works of leading scientists and theologians contain many statements antagonistic to the literal interpretation of the Bible, but Paine's book had a feature that made it much more effective in arousing both approval and condemnation. He was for the time a very brilliant writer. As Dr. Robert Ellis Thompson said to me a few days ago, Paine was the first of the brilliant newspaper writers of the country. He was the forerunner of such men as Ed. Howe and H. L. Mencken. His writings, from "Common Sense," through "The Crisis," the "Rights of Man," to the "Age of Reason," were popular writings, while Priestley's essay

never got far beyond the scholar's circle, and Jefferson's Bible was not published until a few years ago, and then only in limited edition. We may, I think, compare the "Age of Reason" in its relation to the people to "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The character of Negro slavery was well known to all who investigated it, but Mrs. Stowe's novel reached the masses. The abuses of the British labor system, poor laws and law courts are well set forth in blue-books, but nobody reads these but the author, compositor and proof-reader, but "Hard Times," "Oliver Twist" and "Bleak House" have been read by millions. The writers of songs have had more influence on humanity than the writers on philosophy and science. Thomas Wharton, who wrote "Lillibullero," claimed that he had sung a King out of three kingdoms, referring to James II. The man was wise who said, "Give me to write the ballads of a country and I care not who makes its laws." Many of us remember the inspiring effect of the songs during the War of Secession.

In all his work, Paine was actuated by an intense human sympathy. This motive, indeed, was a dominant one in the founders of our nation. Most of them, for example, were opposed to slavery and would have abolished it, but for the strenuous objection of a few Southern colonies. Paine was one of the first to raise his voice against slavery, and to publish a powerful denunciation of it. Jefferson, who shared with Paine a deep desire for human happiness, but whose method of securing this was somewhat different, was also strongly opposed to slavery, and included in his draft of the Declaration a scathing denunciation of it and of the British King for his persistent encouragement of the traffic, but this was stricken out. It is far from impossible that Paine's statement suggested the phraseology that Jefferson used.

I have referred to Jefferson's Bible. He made it by clipping from printed editions of the Gospels such texts as he considered rational and valuable. He was entirely confident that he was right in his selection, for he writes to a friend that "a more beautiful or precious morsel of ethics I have never seen; it is a document in proof that I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus." His claim is unfounded.

All men who try to dismiss dogma and creeds from the midst of society and base their religion upon an interpretation of nature will fail, for "religion is a social phenomenon. It is the expression of those things most treasured by the society which professes or practices them. These are "sacred things." From the primitive taboo, with its power of avenging sacrilege by supernatural terrors, to priestly and legal codes inflicting penalties, the mysteries of religion have been safeguarded from profanation. Persecution, viewed from the standpoint of the dominant group of society, is the preservation of the ancient belief from attack. It is part of the august process of maintaining the moral order." Canfield, *Early Persecutions of the Christians*.

As far as regards the charge of irreligion, which has led to unjust charges of immorality and drunkenness, Paine did not pass beyond the limits which modern ecclesiastics are going and who yet retain their positions in the church. Had Paine said that the Deluge was a failure, he would have been charged with blasphemy, yet that is what the Rev. Elwood Worcester says in his book "Genesis in the Light of Modern Knowledge," published while he was rector of St. Stephen's Church. If Paine had some of the things that the late Dr. Trumbull says in his two books, "The Threshold Covenant" and "The Blood Covenant," he would have been condemned, but Dr. Trumbull's books are not read by the masses; in fact, he put much of the

text in Latin so that it cannot be read except by scholars. One more instance will be sufficient. Paine may have been willing to express the following opinions:

“The Bible has many contradictions and inaccuracies and does not claim to be inerrant. It does not need inspiration of God, if it is true, and inspiration would not avail for its contradictions and inaccuracies. If God, the Father, freely forgives sinners, no atonement is necessary. If there is an atonement, God does not freely forgive.” But these sentences are from a comparatively recent work by William Newton Clarke, which is used as a text-book in the “Ministers’ Course in the Methodist Church.”

Let me, then, bring this discussion to a close. Paine, I think I have shown, was a patriot. Few men did more than he to secure independence and to promote that most important purpose, the federalization of the States. He stands with Washington, Jefferson and Franklin in the first aspect; with Hamilton, James Wilson and Madison in the second. He served in the army; he served in civil life; he labored for the good of humanity. His career in France was characterized by the highest devotion to the welfare of the French people. In opposing the execution of the King, he showed great courage and probably good judgment. In publishing “The Age of Reason” he had the highest motive, and, if the result was not what he expected, the same may be said of many publications of similar nature.

I have shown by a few quotations that distinguished leaders of the church have uttered equally drastic and destructive criticism of the Bible, and yet retained their positions, and I could fill many pages with similar sentences.

Thomas Paine has been much misunderstood, and has been cruelly abused by many persons, but he was a friend of humanity and a friend of political freedom,

and he deserves to be remembered with approval by all Americans.

“States are not great, except as men may make them;
Men are not great unless they do and dare.
All merit comes from facing the unequal;
All glory comes from daring to begin;
And there is one, whose faith, whose fight, whose service,
Fame shall proclaim upon the walls of time.
He dared begin, despite the unavailing;
He dared begin, when failure was a crime.”

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